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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how values education is taught in Chinese and American elementary schools and what values are advocated in Chinese and American elementary textbooks. Differences in attitude, content, method, and outcome are analyzed in the context of social and cultural backgrounds. It is concluded that American textbooks tend to emphasize personal rights, freedom, identity, and the constitutional heritage, while the Chinese educational system uses the Five-Love principles (i.e., love for the country, love for the people, love of work, love for science, love for socialism/leaders) to teach their children. A description of how the author used Asymmetric ToolBook II 5.0 (a software construction set that teachers can use to develop teaching projects) and Microsoft Power Point to present this research in a multimedia environment is provided, including discussion of overall design of the presentation, readability of the screen, importing digital images, avoiding screen clutter, logical reasoning vs. the non-linear nature of multimedia presentation, and navigation control. (AEF)

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# A Multimedia Comparison of Value Orientations Between Chinese and American Elementary Textbooks

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

# A Multimedia Comparison of Value Orientations Between Chinese and American Elementary Textbooks

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Values education is one of the most controversial issues in the United States. Hardly any teacher or administrator in American public schools likes the term *values education*, or its alternative terms: *moral education*, *character development*, and *ethics education* (SSHE, 1991). Compared with this American phenomenon, values education in the Chinese elementary curriculum is less controversial due to the *Outline for Values Education in Elementary Schools* stipulated by the Chinese State Educational Commission in 1988. No matter how controversial the issue of values education appears, all elementary curricula in Chinese and American schools include a large amount of time teaching values, though the definitions and content of values taught may differ significantly.

According to the Hastings Center's report (1991) on the teaching of ethics, *values* are generally used to denote the "normative, valuational, and subjective side of human life," and *ethics* more often refer to ethical theories and the "application of principles and norms to moral problems". The American Heritage Dictionary (1991) defines value as "a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable". *Values education*, as used in this article, includes both normative values and their application principles for students.

Although values education in the elementary curriculum helps students develop normative values and application principles in ethical issues, the means by which it is accomplished in Chinese and American elementary curricula are substantially different. These differences are reflected in teaching objectives, instructional content and teaching methods.

The first part of this paper examines what values are advocated in the elementary textbooks of Chinese and American schools and analyzes these differences in the context of their social and cultural backgrounds. The second part describes how the researcher uses the Asymmetric ToolBook and the Microsoft Power Point to present the research in a multimedia environment.

## How Values Education Is Taught in Chinese and American Elementary Schools

In 1988 the Chinese State Education Commission promulgated the *Outline for Values Education in Elementary Schools*. It set the aims, content, basic requirements, principles and implementation methods for values education in the elementary schools. The goal of the Outline was to teach students good behavior through cultivating the Five Loves (i.e., love for the country, love for the people, love of work, love for science and love for socialism/leaders). These goals were to be achieved through moral education classes, values education in other subjects, extracurricular activities, after school activities organized by the Young Pioneers and student associations, and through support of families and the society as a whole (CSEC, 1994).

Because Chinese elementary students only have an hour of moral education every week—an elementary total of 170 to 240 hours depending on 5-year or 6-year schooling,many values education goals have to be achieved through subject classes. Thus the Chinese language arts class has an average of 10 hours every week and a total of 1666 to 1734 hours depending on years elementary schooling (CSEC, 1994). In addition to the content of the Language Arts, the Chinese language arts class also includes much of the values education content of Social Studies found in American elementary schools.

On the other hand, setting aside a class called *Moral Education* in American public schools is virtually impossible. Few educators and parents will endorse it. As Wagner (1996) put it, "Efforts to impose forms of character education with a predetermined set of values onto students and communities often provoke bitter and divisive debate between many liberals and conservatives" (p.36). Therefore, there is no separate subject labeled *Values Education* in American schools. Most of the teaching objectives related to values education are to be fulfilled in the social studies class. Consequently, the writer selected the Chinese language arts textbooks and the American social studies textbooks to compare the values orientation of their elementary curricula.



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The Chinese language arts textbooks selected for the research were the 3rd to 8th volumes of the *Elementary Chinese Textbooks for the Six-Year Elementary System*. The 1st and 2nd volumes were basically Chinese character recognition; beyond the 9th volume, there was mostly literature. Therefore, the writer used the 2nd through 4th grade textbooks (i.e., 3rd to 8th volumes) to examine the major content and values orientation. The American textbooks selected were the *Houghton Mifflin Social Studies Series* (1994). It was one of the popular social studies textbook series for American elementary schools.

## Values Emphasized in American Elementary Textbooks

John Jarolimek (1990), Chair of the Task Force on Scope and Sequence of the National Council of Social Studies, summed up the democratic beliefs and values that should be taught in the social studies class of public schools as: rights of the individual, freedoms of the individual, responsibilities of the individual, and beliefs concerning societal conditions and governmental responsibilities. The Houghton Mifflin series emphasized: (a) National Identity, which includes pluralism, democracy, American symbols, and reaffirmation of American ideals; (b) Constitutional Heritage, which consists of balance of power, origin of constitution, and reinterpretation of ideals; and (c) Citizenship, which covers individual and state, democratic behaviors, selection of leaders, human rights, settlement of disputes, and strategies for pluralism.

Based on Jarolimek's recommendations (Jarolimek, 1990), the Scope and Sequence of the Houghton Mifflin series (Houghton Mifflin, 1994), and David Saxe's analysis in *Social Studies for the Elementary Teacher* (Saxe, 1994), the values highlighted in the American elementary social studies textbooks may be summed up as individual rights, personal freedom and responsibilities, constitutional heritage, and national/personal identities. Table 1 illustrates the values in the American social studies textbooks:

## Values Highlighted in the Chinese Elementary Textbooks

Because there was no detailed outline of values education in the Chinese textbooks selected, the writer used a self-designed instrument. To examine the major value messages advocated in the Chinese Language Arts textbooks, the writer combined the major values Chinese education goals of Five-Loves with one of the most important values in American textbooks, i.e., individual rights. These categories are: (a) Love for Science (including natural facts and stories of scientists), (b) Love for Political Leaders and Social System, (c) Appreciation of Cultural Heritage, (d) Affirmation of Individual Rights, and (e) Other Values.

## Procedure

Based on these five categories, the writer counted and clustered the major themes/moral messages delivered in each textbook to examine their values orientation. For example, a story about the late Premier Zhou Enlai and his caring for people was grouped under Love for Political Leaders, and "The Story of Isaac Newton" was clustered under Love for Science. By using the lesson as a unit, the writer counted a total of 190 lessons in the 8 volumes of the textbooks. If the researcher discerned multiple value messages, the lesson went to the category which highlighted its most prominent moral message. To test the validity of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted. The researcher shared her counting and content analysis of 5 lessons with the students and teachers of the Hope Chinese School in Maryland and revised her instrument accordingly. The results of the research are presented in Table 2.

Table 1.
Advocated Values in Social Studies Textbooks for American Students

| Rights of Individual Identity | Personal Freedom | Responsibilities | Constitutional | National/Personal Heritage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| -Right to life<br>-Right to liberty<br>-Right to dignity<br>-Right to security<br>-Right to equality<br>-Right to | -Freedom to participate in political process<br>-Freedom of worship<br>-Freedom of opportunity<br>-Freedom of conscience<br>-Freedom of assembly<br>-Freedom of inquiry | -Respect human life<br>-Respect rights of others<br>-Respect property of others<br>-Be honest thought<br>-Demonstrate self-control<br>-Participate in the democratic process | -Citizenship<br>-Belief in a democratic government<br>-Development of<br>-Be compassionate<br>Constitution | -National iden.<br>-Individual iden.<br>-Macro cultures<br>-Micro culture<br>Constitution<br>-Components of the Constitution<br>-Application of the |

*Based on the Social Studies Guidelines of John Jarolimek, Scope and Sequence of Houghton Mifflin Social Studies Series and David Saxe's Social Studies for the Elementary Teacher.*
*(Changes made by Julie Bao, 1997)*

Table 2.
Emphasized Values in the Chinese Elementary Language Arts Textbooks

| Volumes | Love for Science Natural Facts | Love for Political Leaders/System Stories of Scientists | Appreciation of Cultural Heritage | Affirmation of Individual Rights | Other Values | Total Lessons | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3rd | 15 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 0 | 1 | 33 |
| 4th | 12 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 31 |
| 5th | 17 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 32 |
| 6th | 13 | 1 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 32 |
| 7th | 11 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 31 |
| 8th | 12 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 31 |
| Total Lessons | 80 | 14 | 34 | 51 | 0 | 11 | 190 |
| % of Total | 42.1 | 7.4 | 17.9 | 26.8 | 0.0 | 5.8 | 100 |

If one examines Table 2 in light of the Five-Loves advocated by the Chinese State Education Commission, four of the Loves are sufficiently covered. Indeed, the *Love for Science* category takes up about half of the content. The 5th category, *Love for Work*, though not indicated in a separate category, is well represented in many lessons. It is *Affirming Individual Rights*, one of the most important values in American culture, that is hardly mentioned in any of the Chinese elementary Language Arts textbooks. Figure 1 illustrates the cluster and percentages of core values in 190 Chinese lessons.

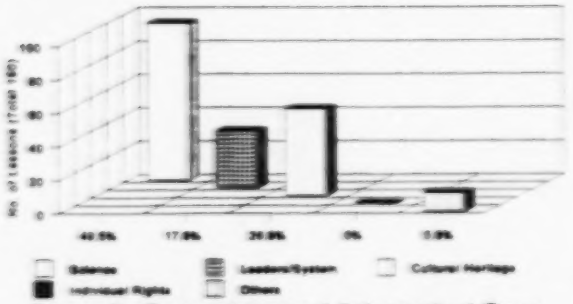


Figure 1. Percentages of Advocated Core Values in 190 Chinese Lessons.

## Differences in Values Education between American and Chinese Schools

The data above show a substantial difference in the orientation of values education between Chinese and American schools. These differences can be perceived as differences in attitudes, differences in content, differences in teaching methods, and differences in outcomes.

### Attitude Differences

The first difference between American and Chinese elementary schools lies in the different attitudes toward values education. In China, values education is generally regarded as a positive term. Moral education is advocated and built into the formal curricula of elementary schools. In contrast to this Chinese attitude, most American teachers and parents view values education as problematic. Many parents and church groups challenge the values taught in public schools and demand parental control in shaping their children's value system.

### Content Differences

As shown in the two tables above, the values taught and emphasized in these two countries are very different. The American values system emphasizes rights, freedom, identity and constitutional heritage. Love for others is not a priority value in mainstream American culture. On the other hand, the Chinese system emphasizes the Five Loves and personal responsibilities. The concept of individual rights and freedom, a primary value in American society, is hardly encouraged in Chinese elementary textbooks. Just as American schools emphasize individual rights, Chinese schools place great emphasis on individual responsibilities. From children's classroom responsibilities to the roles of a citizen, the concept of personal responsibilities is well specified in the Chinese textbooks.

### Method Differences

Compared with the traditional teaching methods in Chinese classrooms which involve much written work and rote learning, the American elementary classroom provides far more participatory and hands-on approaches. From acting out the role of a citizen to designing a classroom constitution, American students are asked, from a very early age, to participate in the democratic process. During instruction, numerous teaching aids are employed to teach

values, such as making a Flag Cake to teach American symbols and ideals. Fun and hands-on exploration are highly emphasized throughout the learning process.

### Outcome Differences

To observe the impact of values education on American young adults and determine their perceptions of values, the writer conducted a study among 70 Education seniors at Shippensburg University. The writer designed a questionnaire by mixing the Five Loves recommended by the Chinese State Educational Commission with the five values highlighted by Jarolimek and the Houghton Mifflin Social Studies Series. The writer asked the students to rearrange them in the order of their importance to them.

Of the 70 students that completed the questionnaire, 34 people (49%) ranked Freedom of the Individual as the most important value for them and 26 (37%) ranked the Rights of the Individual highest. The combined rate of ranking the Freedom of the Individual and Rights of the Individual as most important totaled 60 people, 86% of the participants.

Ranked as least important values were *Love for Science* and *Love for My System*. Though the writer changed the political phrase of *Love for Socialism* into *Love for my Social System*, fifty-two students (74%) ranked it as the least important. Figure 2 illustrates the percentages of the most important values.

Figure 2. Most Important Values for 70 American College Students

## Summary and Discussions

A comparison of Chinese and American elementary textbooks indicates a substantial difference in values education in the two countries. The American textbooks tend to emphasize personal rights, freedom, identity and the constitutional heritage, while the Chinese educational system uses the Five-Love principles to teach their children.

The different values orientation in school textbooks reflect the different social and cultural traditions of the two countries. The American schools are created in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and guided by the Constitution of the United States. Both documents are largely born out of a philosophy that has its roots in the Magna Carter and in Social Contract theory. The macroculture of American society subscribes to a values system that has freedom, rights and individualism at its heart. The American macroculture maximizes individual gains within a legal framework. Working for the interest of others is a secondary orientation in American society. This is why when the late President John F. Kennedy (1961) said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," it became a pacesetting message for the nation.

On the other hand, the same famous quote could have been said ideologically by thousands of Chinese political instructors because it is a dominant value in Chinese society. The guidelines of values education for Chinese schools are largely based on Confucius' philosophy which emphasizes individual responsibility and service to the family, community and the country. The values education curricula of both countries are invariably rooted in their historical and cultural backgrounds.

Grounded in different cultural heritage and nurtured by prevailing social philosophies, the values education curriculum is, first of all, a product of a society. It then adds to that society by helping prepare ideal citizens who perpetuate and improve the existing system. The experience of comparing values education in Chinese and American elementary textbooks illustrated this very phenomenon.

## Multimedia Presentation of Research

The multimedia presentation of this research was originally created by Asymmetric ToolBook II 5.0, a software construction set that teachers can use to develop their teaching projects. It has all the features of Windows applications, such as graphical user interface, event-driven programming and ability to interact with other Windows applications. The researcher used its graphics, buttons, sound, animation and Openscript features to create a multimedia presentation of the above research. For the sake of software compatibility and presentation convenience at the 9th SITE Conference, the researcher converted it into a Power Point presentation. The finished product contains 40 screens consisting of twenty digital pictures, 3 movie clips, 3 figures, some music and many hypertext pages. Though some of the animations are lost in the transition, their design principles and major features are quite similar. Some of the designer's experiences follow.

### OverAll Design of the Presentation

The overall design of a multimedia presentation is critical. The designer not only has to consider what she

wants to present, but also what messages the audience will get from viewing the hypertext screens. Very often the audience is drawn toward the dazzling electronic bells and whistles. The designer needs to spend much time at the beginning of the project selecting the most effective communication approaches.

### Readability of the Screen

Readability of the screen is very important because the bulk of the information will be obtained from the screen. Select an appropriate font size, use content words and limit the number of headings. The font for the opening page may be set at about 40 points with each page containing no more than 6 lines. It is unnecessary to write detailed information on the screen; when the presenter reads the 5 to 6 essential words in a line, the readers will be able to fill in the rest of the information. For general purposes, using templates is often a convenient shortcut.

### Import Digital Images

The Asymmetric ToolBook and Power Point employ different ways to import graphs, charts, pictures, and videos, but the methods are more or less the same, namely, cut and paste, insert or import. Spending some time on the software, one will get used to them quickly. It is the creativity and depth of the project and selection of images that will take the bulk of one's time.

### Avoid Screen Clutter

Because multimedia software enables the author to use fancy tools with great ease, it is important not to distract the readers by using too many dazzling digital images or music. Sometimes, excessive use of transitions and special effects may make your presentation *too* cute. Consequently, the ultimate purpose of the presentation is compromised.

### Logical Reasoning vs. Non-linear Nature of Multimedia Presentation

Multimedia is any combination of data, digital movies, animations, graphics, text, and sound delivered on a computer. It is a highly non-linear environment. Therefore, the designer needs to balance the logical and sequential presentation of main content pages with the temptation of using overwhelming effects.

### Navigation Control

It is important that the presenter design the demonstration in a way that allows her to navigate the demonstration with ease and to change the length and direction of each screen at will.

Selecting and designing a multimedia presentation is a never-ending learning process. In this project, the researcher tried Macromedia Director, Autherware, Asymmetric ToolBook II, and, finally, Microsoft Power Point. She might have just scratched the surface of the capacities of these multimedia software programs, but one thing is clear—a multimedia environment has certainly made her presentation more effective and, therefore, made her research more accessible to more students and colleagues.

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